Causes of Teachers Conflict in Private Primary Schools in Tanzania

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Abstract

The paper reviews the causes of teachers' conflict in private primary schools in Iringa municiparity. Data collection was done through questionnaires and interviews and analysis was performed using thematic for interviews and quantification to compute frequencies and percentages for questionnaires. The study shows that the causes of teacher conflict in private primary schools in Iringa municiparity were poor administration skills by head teachers, poor performance, difference perception, indiscipline among teachers and students, improper communication, favoritism, different perception and misuse of power by head teachers. The paper concluded that, the head teachers and teachers should find out the actual root causes of conflict in private primary schools and involve all stakeholders in addressing them and recommended that both head teachers and teachers in private primary schools should practice proper communication to enhance good relationship, love and mutual respect among themselves.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the causes of teachers' conflict in private primary schools in Iringa municiparity. Conflicts exist in all organizations, and it may take many forms, it may mean disagreement, hostility, contradiction or incompatibility between individuals and groups in the organizations (Gupta, 2009). Babyegeya (2002) described conflict as a breakdown of communication among the members of the organization, argued that the more closely people are expected to work together, the more the possibility of conflict to rise. Conflicts in schools exist in both developed and developing countries. In the developed countries conflicts in school manifest in different scenarios. Matenga (2014) noted out that racial segregation, discrimination and prejudice in California schools were the main sources

of conflict. Literatures also indicate that there are several cases of conflicts in the education systems of many African countries.

On other hand Ramani & Zhimin (2010) described that; there were conflicts in Kenyan schools. They argue that these conflicts arose when the school administrations failed to sufficiently provide the necessary resources for effective learning such as food and learning aids. In addition, Adhiambo & Simwata (2011) asserted that educational institutions in Kenya occasionally experienced conflict of varied nature due to different reasons which most of the conflict ends up being destructive to life and property. There are frequently reported conflicts in most of the schools in Tanzania, many of them involve school administrators and teachers (UNESCO, 2005). A good number of conflicts have been documented in Tanzanian primary schools as Dady (2015) noted that conflict that erupt in primary schools tend to be fuelled by organization factors such as poor performance, management style and favoritisms, thus factor inspired the research to conduct this study.

Methodology
The paper adopted the pragmatism paradigm since it emphasizes shared of beliefs among members of a special area (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This paper uses mixed method research approach to add value the research findings through integration of both qualitative and quantitative. A case study design used to describe a unit in detail. Data were collected through 48 respondents, whereby 40 teachers answered questionnaires and 8 head teachers were interviewed from 8 private primary schools in Iringa municiparity which are Star, Highlands, Ummusalama, Hyperlink, St.Charles, St. Dominic Savio, St. Dominic Savio Mkimbizi and Kigonzile primary schools. Random sampling was employed to both teachers and head teachers. Data from questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively by coded and quantified to compute the frequencies and percentages and those from qualitative were analyzed trough content analysis and presented through direct quotations and interpretation.

Causes of Teachers Conflict
The objective of this paper intended to find out causes of teachers' conflict occur within private primary schools in Iringa municiparity in order to address them to reduce conflict occurred in schools. The findings reveal various reasons as stated at this part.

Indiscipline and Poor Administration Skills
From the findings 35 (88%) of the teachers cited that poor administration skill among the head teachers was the most reason cause conflict in their schools. The reason is that many head teachers come into position without any prior training on administration skills while some get these positions because of their long-service in the school. In this case, most of the schools face frequent conflicts because of inability of managing conflict when arises. Okoton & Okoton (2003) who asserted that school administration in Nigeria was hampered by high rate of conflicts caused by different factors including poor administration skills by head teachers. Lagat (2013) revealed

the existence of incompetent head teachers who could not manage all school matters well, cause conflict in their school. In line with the findings head teachers with poor administration skills might felt into poor communication, unfair treatment and poor management which resulted into conflicts. Therefore pre and in service training should be provided to head teachers to minimize conflict occurred in schools.

On other hand 33 (83%) of teachers and head teachers indicated that indiscipline among students and teachers were among the factors that cause teachers conflicts in private primary schools in Iringa municipality. The most common cases of indiscipline among the students related to the collective misbehavior such as chewing gum in the class, fighting, wearing dirty clothing and disobeying school authority. Therefore, with regard to teachers' indiscipline, the study identified lateness, absenteeism in the class; poor teaching and poor classroom administration were the main causes of conflicts. To prove this head teacher from school B asserted that:

> Some teachers' in our school have a bad behavior of not listening to the instruction given by the leadership, you tell them to try to get to school early but they do not, they have the ears but they don't hear the situation sometimes lead to conflict (Interview, Head teacher from school B: February 27, 2021).

The quotation shows how indiscipline among teachers can lead to conflicts between them and head teacher. These findings supported by a study of Mwabungulu (2015) who discovered that teachers engaged in like excessive drinking alcohol, absenteeism, truancy, lateness, improper grading and negligence of duty which lead to conflict among them. The study of Nyaga (2009) discovered that indiscipline case in secondary schools in Kenya involve drug abuse, fighting, insubordination, sneaking from school, destruction of school property and stealing of other student property was the most factor lead to conflict in schools. Therefore, moral education should be given to students and teachers to reduce conflict in school.

Improper Communication
Communication is one of the key elements for effective implementation and accomplishment of school goal. Out of 32 (80%) of head teachers and teachers in private primary schools agreed that improper communication resulted from difference perception, failure to communicate, wrong assumptions and gossip the result lead conflict among the members of schools. To prove this head teacher from school asserted that:

> There are times when it happens that you give instructions on Something to the teacher but the teacher does something different from what you said, the situation sometimes can lead to conflict (Interview, Head teacher from school F: January 23, 2021).

The quotation shows how failure to communicate lead conflict between teacher and head teacher in schools. This finding is in line with the opinion of Adhiambo &

Samantha (2011) who asserted that communication breakdown in schools in Kenya is a major source that develops conflicts among teachers and head teachers. Poor communication network is highly rated as one of the main causes of conflict in schools (Iwuagwu, 2011). Communication is considered a vital tool for effective implementation of school duties, so teachers and head teachers need to learn how to communicate in order to reduce conflict in schools.

Poor Performance and Favoritism

Out of 27 (68%) of teachers noted that many head-teachers look for the best performance of the teachers in their schools without considering other factors. In regard to this, the head teachers had zero tolerance with teachers who failed to archive performance goals. This is supported by Dady (2015) who asserted that poor performance is one of the reasons that fuels the eruption of conflicts between head teachers and teachers. Academic performance is often influenced by difference factors such as school culture, discipline among members of schools, learning facilities, proper guidance, gender difference, teacher's education and teaching style and school environment. So head teachers should not look at performance only also other factors that contribute to performance in order to reduce conflict.

Smith (2013) posited that favoritism means to prefer someone or group of people from others just because management likes them.18 (45%) of teachers noted that school heads sometimes favored some teachers at the expense of others and this created a sense of bitterness, anger and hatred. It is this bitterness that brews rumors, jealousy and conflict at school. This is in line with a study by Kipyego (2013) who discovered that giving preferential treatment to some employees in organizations, a phenomenon that affected job satisfaction. Therefore, all the members of school regardless of their skills and experience should equal treated preferential treatment to the one and ignoring the others affect members motivation and encourage disrespect hence the subordinate may be less willing to follow the directions which resulted into conflict between them.

Difference Perception and Misuse of Power

The study found that 27 (68%) of teachers cited that difference perception between head teachers and teachers always cause conflict among them. Always occur when the management holds staffs meeting to discuss matters pertaining to school issues, conflict sometimes erupt in such meetings when the two sides fail to agree. To prove this head teacher from school A asserted that:

> You find we are in meeting, the teacher come up with different
> views from the relevant one, when you try to direct him or her
> that he or she thinks wrong sometime we end up in conflict
> (Interview, Head from school A: January, 23, 2021).

The quotation shows how difference perception can lead to conflict. The opinion is in line with Gupta (2009) asserted that when the member of school have difference perception of distrust relationship between them, the group becomes hostile and

conflict may arise due to aggressive nature of some members misunderstanding. Therefore, difference perception is inevitable in a group of people but we should learn to agree with those who differ with us.

Misuse of power was another cause of conflict in schools identified by 30 (75%) of teachers in the study. Teachers reported that some of head teachers employed leadership styles that led to conflicts between them and staff. For stance, some of the head-teachers use extreme power in deciding critical issues the situation which lead to conflict. Similar findings were noted in Dick & Thodlan (2013) they identified that autocratic tendencies by the school leaders led to conflict between teachers and management. Autocratic heads tended to fail to achieve purposeful cooperation and collaboration among the teachers leading less self-commitment, less motivation and hence poor performance. Misuse of power by school heads do not develop teachers to be innovative and self-motive to continuously develop and drive the school as an organization (Johdi & Apitree, 2021). Misuse of power is a problem for many institutions including the school, but teachers should learn to adhere with school rules and regulations and for the head teachers participatory leadership should be encouraged to reduce conflict in school.

Strictness and Goal Incompatibility
Strictness on the part of the management was another source of teachers' conflict as asserted by the head teachers. Conflict arises when they perform duties on monitoring the assigned work as they agreed, because some teachers do not like to be monitored and some they do not complete their assigned task on time the situation that lead to conflict. To prove this head teacher from school G assented that:

> You agree with teachers let's do something for time being for example before going to classes make sure you have prepared Lesson plan, but the teachers sometimes ignore and when you start monitoring as why they have not prepared the lesson plan that is when the conflict begins (Head teacher from school G, January 2021).

The quotation shows how head teacher strictness monitoring the assigned works lead to conflict.

Similar findings were noted by Omisore & Abiodun (2014) they asserted that in many organizations, there is an underlying tension between managers and employees because most people do not like being told what they have to do, it is observed that the very strict managers often have conflict with their employees and Sometimes people try to engage in conflict to increase their power or status in an organization. In line with the finding teachers learn to adhere with the rules and regulation to reduce conflict occurred in school.

Furthermore, another head teacher felt that, in their school goal incompatibility was the source of teachers' conflict. The reason is that, when teachers have incompatible

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goal from school goal possibility of conflict to arise was very high. For instance, the school goal was to complete the syllabus at planned time and make students achieve better, but sometimes other teachers felt to do so, a situation may lead to conflict. Very often, the possibility of conflict increases substantially when people in organization have different or incompatible goals (Omisore & Abiodum, 2014). Goal incompatibility brings conflict to many institutions including school, and those conflicts hold back the development of respective institution and sometimes can cause death, so agreement is very crucial to survive.

Scarcity of Teaching Resources
Interestingly during the study, the researcher was informed that scarcity of teaching resources was also a cause teacher's conflict in Iringa municiparity. Head teacher from school C informed the researcher that resource were fewer than their requirement, so they had to share it. This often leads to conflict because each teacher needs the same resources necessarily undermines other. Mcshare & Glinow (2008) asserted that in many work places we have to share resources, the scarcer the resources in organization, the greater the chance for conflict situation. Therefore, in line with the findings head teachers should encourage participatory sharing of resources also improvisation of what found in their environment to reduce conflict occurred in schools.

One teacher reported that, often the school manager expected good academic results immediately after hiring teachers, regardless of the employment contract and other agreement. When things go otherwise, head teachers receive instruction to fire teacher who fail to produce the best academic performance, the situation causes conflict between teachers and head teachers. This is seriously problem for many private institutions, but when members adhere with employment law will reduce the violation of employment contract and elimination of conflict in schools. Another factor that causes teachers conflict was personal interest as the head teachers from school D noted that conflicts arise because of personal interest one has, a teacher can see that the position you hold gives you a lot of privileges, so they start hating you for no reasons. Such situation may lead to conflict between you and the respective teacher. However, personal interest cannot be avoided, but teachers should comply with head-teacher's privilege because of the position he or she has.

Conclusion
The head teachers and teachers' should find out the actual root causes of conflict in private primary schools and involve all stakeholders in the school in order to address them. Also, head-teachers and teachers should be trained through conferences or seminars on conflict and conflict management strategies to reduce conflicts occurred in schools, the upgrading head teachers and teachers skills and seminars on conflict and conflict management strategies regularly are the key factors for enhancing better and smooth teaching and learning environment for better performance. Both head teachers and teachers in private primary schools should be trained on proper

communication skills to enhance good relationship among them. Also participatory, rather than autocratic style of management should be encouraged in schools.

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